The PARIS COMMUNE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The Paris Commune of 1871 arose victoriously sixty years ago from the ruins of the Second Empire and, after seventy epoch-making days, it succumbed heroically under the hail of bullets of the Versailles counter-revolution. The Commune was, in a far higher sense than was the June insurrection of 1848, the "most tremendous event in the history of European civil wars" (Marx) in the nineteenth century. It marked the violent conclusion of the "pre-history" of the proletarian revolution; with it begins the era of proletarian revolutions. It was the brilliant culmination of the romantic "Sturm und Drang" period of the revolutionary proletariat, which was glorious in heroic deeds and bloody defeats, in bold initiative and growing attempts. But chiefly it was the first dress rehearsal in world history of the Socialist revolution of the working class, which, at the head of all oppressed and exploited classes, for the first time set up its power by its own might with the purpose of setting the whole of society free from the system of enslavement and exploitation, as well as securing its own political and social emancipation.

The Commune was a turning-point of decisive importance. It stands at the threshold of the modern age of imperialism. The conditions, methods and aims of the proletarian revolutionary movement in the age of imperialism were, so to speak, grandly foreshadowed in it. Its lessons were the starting-point for formulating the system of strategy and tactics of the proletarian revolution in its matured Leninist form. The decades of experience of the class struggle and the concrete lessons of the proletarian revolutions of the twentieth century, above all of the victorious October revolution, were first needed in order that the historical significance of the Commune in all its grandeur might be learned and the profound actuality of its lessons be understood in our own day.

Before examining more closely the exact historical rôle of the Commune in the history of the proletarian revolution, we wish to recapitulate in general outline the course of events from March 18 to May 28, 1871.

The Franco-German war of 1870-71, which had been kindled by Louis Bonaparte in order to bolster up the tottering structure of the Second Empire, dealt the death-blow to this system (space will not permit us to deal with Bismarck's rôle and aims in the war). Marx's brilliant prediction in the first manifesto of the International Workingmen's Association of July 23, 1871 : "The funeral bell of the Second Empire has already struck in Paris. It will end as it began, with a parody"—was fulfilled at Sedan. With military defeat, the Bonaparte empire, its foundations long since undermined, collapsed. The republic which took over the pitiful legacy left by the adventurer Louis Bonaparte, did not have to lift a finger to overthrow the throne. "This republic did not overthrow the throne, it merely stepped into the place it vacated. It was proclaimed, not as a social conquest, but as a measure of national defence." (Marx, *Civil War in France.*)

From this special situation it is clear that the republic that liquidated the Bonapartist regime, entered upon its life with a Janus-head. At almost the same time that the "Government of National Defence" took the rudder of the State into its hands on September 4, the armed proletariat of Paris set up its committees of control in order to watch over the measures taken by Thiers' government for the defence of Paris and to assure the food supply of Paris. And so arose a peculiar form of "dyarchy" which was repeated in history almost a half-century later, at a higher level of development, after the collapse of the Tsarist regime in Russia, in the period from February, 1917, till the October revolution.

The period from September 4, 1870, till March 18, 1871, was marked by the struggle for power between these two centres of Government. The strength of the Parisian proletariat rested on the power of arms, on the armed force of the National Guard. The disarming of the Parisian proletariat was therefore the real Government programme of men like Thiers and Jules Favre. Thus the Government of "National Defence" was transformed into the Government of national betrayal, and the defence of Paris, which the proletariat itself had taken in hand, became under these conditions the point of departure for the decisive clash of March 18, 1871.

On January 8, 1871, Paris, which had been starved out, had to capitulate to the Prussian army. "The forts were handed over, the encircling fortifications dismantled, the weapons of the troops of the line and of the Garde Mobile were delivered up, the troops themselves were regarded as prisoners of war. But the National Guard

kept their weapons and cannon and merely entered into an armistice with the victor. And the conquerors did not dare make a triumphal entry into Paris. . . . Such was the respect inspired by the Paris workers in the army before which all the armies of the Empire had lowered their weapons; and the Prussian Junkers who had come to wreak vengeance on the home of the revolution had to stand still respectfully and saluted this very revolution, armed and alert." (Engels, Introduction to the *Civil War in France.*)

What the Prussians had not dared to do in January, Thiers attempted to carry out two months later with the support of the Prussian bayonets. On March 18 he sent troops of the line to Paris to steal the National Guard's artillery, which had been cast by the Paris workers themselves. But the proletariat did not allow itself to be disarmed. The provocative intention of the Versailles Government kindled a spontaneous uprising of the people. The Versailles troops were sent home with cracked heads, and the elected committee of the National Guard, a kind of soviet of Red Guard Deputies, took over power in the name of the Paris Proletariat.

What was the specific character of the new Governmental authority and what was its programme? The Central Committee of the National Guard, in its proclamation of March 18, gave the classic answer:

> "The proletarians of Paris, in the midst of the defeats and betrayals of the ruling class, have come to understand that they must save the situation by taking the conduct of public affairs into their own hands. . . . They have realised that it is their highest duty and their absolute right to make themselves the masters of their own fates and to seize the power of the Government."

Thus, the class character of the revolutionary events in Paris and the class content of the Paris Commune, which had been "thrust into the background" by the struggle for national defence against the alien conqueror and had been more or less veiled over, was sharply defined. "Its real secret," says Marx in his *Civil War in France*, "was this: it was essentially a Government of the working class, the result of the struggle between the producing class and the expropriating class, the political form, at last discovered, under which the economic emancipation of labour could be accomplished."

It cannot be our task here to describe in detail the historic deeds of

the Commune during the seventy-two days of its heroic struggle. In the manifestos of the General Council, as drawn up by Marx, and in his *Civil War in France*, we have imperishable documents which, with Marx's genius and impassioned penetration, picture and analyse the history of the Commune, its "Heaven-storming" revolutionary measures and its tragic errors, committed as a result of the immaturity of the proletariat and the social and political situation.

The revolutionary activity of the Paris Commune was hindered and in part rendered illusory by manifold circumstances. The decisive obstacle was that it was continuously under the fire of the Versailles counter-revolution and hemmed in by a ring of enemies and consequently, it was obliged to concentrate all its strength on the defence of the revolution. The historian of, and the fighter in the Commune, Lissagaray, reproaches the leaders of the Commune for failing "to understand that the Commune was a barricade and not a Government office." This reproach is not unfounded, but it holds only half the truth. It was just because the Commune, under the onslaught of the united Versailles and Bismarckian counter-revolution, had to be a "barricade," and could not be a "Government office," that it was able to take only the first awkward steps towards organising and firmly establishing the power of the victorious working class.

In attempting to master such a task, the Commune, in addition, lacked the organising and guiding force of a strong proletarian class-party with clear principles. The Paris proletariat was chiefly recruited from amongst the exploited petty artisans. Modern industry in Paris was still at its initial stage. There was no true revolutionary party. The various political groups of the proletariat, resting on an uneven degree of development of class consciousness, reflected in their multiplicity the immaturity of the proletariat itself. In the Commune, which was formed by the elections of March 26, as well as in the Central Committee of the National Guard, there sat representatives of the most diverse tendencies: petty-bourgeois anarchists of the Proudhon stamp, Blanquists, Babeufists, Jacobins and supporters of the International Workingmen's Association. The Internationalists were in the minority but their dominating part in formulating the ideas of the Commune is clear in all the decisive measures of the Commune, despite their personal, political and theoretical inexperience and weakness.

The Paris proletariat was still too immersed in the deep-rooted traditions of petty-bourgeois, democratic Utopianism—which corres-

ponded to the predominance of small artisan industry—and in the patriotic illusions inherited from the great bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth century and the period of Jacobin dictatorship. The experiences of the Commune and of the bloody "witches' sabbath" of the May days were necessary in order to clear the minds of the French working class of these obsolete ideas.

Thus, the Commune stopped half-way in its course and fell victim to its unavoidable fate. On May 28th, the last barricades went down under the fire of the Versailles machine-guns and the first revolutionary workers' Government was drowned in the blood of more than twenty-five thousand men, women and children, the boldest and most heroic fighters of the Paris proletariat.

. . . . . .

In order that its complete historical importance may be grasped, the Commune must be regarded from two points of view, which are merely two forms of one and the same historical attitude: first, its specific role in the process of development of the proletarian revolution; second, its importance as the point of departure and as a guide for the proletarian revolutions of the twentieth century.

The Paris Commune had its basis in the experiences of the June insurrection of 1848; it turned its lessons into deeds. The significance of the June uprising Marx saw in the fact that after June, 1848, every revolution in France would bring up the question of "overturning bourgeois society," while before February, 1848, it could be a question only of "overturning the form of government" (Marx, *Class Struggle in France*). The Paris Commune furnished the solution of the problem. In June, 1848, the working class was "still incapable of carrying through its own revolution." The Commune, on the other hand, was "the first revolution in which the working class was openly recognised as the only class capable of social initiative." In the year 1848, the proletariat was only able to set the task, to conquer "the terrain for the struggle for its social emancipation." With the Commune it began its struggle for its actual emancipation; the Commune was to serve as the lever for overthrowing the existing economic foundations on which rested the position of classes and therefore class rule. In June, the French proletariat constituted itself a separate class and received its baptism of blood under Cavaignac's bullets. In the Commune the proletariat for the first time in history brought into being its own class rule.

The history of the class struggles and of the proletarian revolutions

of the nineteenth century in France has furnished imperishable lessons to the world proletariat. All later proletarian revolutions and revolutionary uprisings rest upon the experiences of the June revolt and of the Commune. The Commune opened a new epoch in the history of the proletarian revolution, it presented "a new point of departure which was of tremendous import in world history" (Marx to Kugelmann, April 17, 1871). Its lessons, which served as guide-posts for the world proletariat, have been fully and in their ripest form transformed into reality by the victorious October revolution.

The decisive lesson of the Commune, surpassing all others in significance and including them all in itself, was the concrete formulation of the content of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In his *Civil War in France* and in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx drew from the experiences of the June uprising the conclusion that the next step of the French revolution would consist in: "not, as before, transferring the bureaucratic and military machinery from one hand to the other, but in smashing it" (Marx to Kugelmann, April 12, 1871). By what should the annihilated bourgeois machinery of the State be replaced? This question, which was decisive for the further development of the proletarian revolution, was answered by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* still more or less abstractly. The "organisation of the proletariat as ruling class should take the place of the bourgeois State." In the *Class Struggles in France*, on the basis of the June lessons, Marx formulated the battle-cries: "Down with the bourgeoisie! Dictatorship of the Working Class!" In the *Eighteenth Brumaire* he made these watchwords concrete through the slogan: "Break up the bureaucratic and military machine" of the bourgeoisie. But these words took on flesh and blood for the first time in the Commune, came into being as concrete reality. The Commune was "the political form, at last discovered, under which the economic emancipation could at last be accomplished" (Marx, *Civil War in France*). And Engels added the comment:

> "Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Engels, Introduction to the *Civil War in France*, of March 18, 1891.)

The interpretation of the Commune, worked out by Marx's genius, can be understood in all its profundity and actuality only on the basis

of the revolutionary experiences of the twentieth century, which are integrally connected with the lessons of the Commune, go beyond them and give them concrete reality. It is therefore historically true to say that these lessons were consciously falsified by the dominant revisionist and centralist tendencies in the Western European Social-Democratic Parties and were "forgotten" by the left groups, and that Lenin had first to "excavate" them, so to speak, on the basis of the revolutionary events in Russia, in order to discover anew and to deepen further the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as it had been deduced by Marx from the history of the Commune.

In the revolutions of 1905 and of October, 1917, the lessons of the Commune found their historical application on a still higher level. With the widening of its social basis and with the increase in importance of its historical tasks, the social content of the proletarian dictatorship changed and the forms of this dictatorship, created by the exploited masses of toilers for the violent overthrow of the rule of the exploiters, were further developed. To-day we are able to determine the various steps in the development of this "higher type of the democratic State" (Lenin), the "Commune-State." The Paris Commune, though still undeveloped, though still burdened with the rudimentary forms of petty-bourgeois democracy, was the first form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It had to perform the historic task of "setting free the elements of the new society" (Marx, *Civil War in France*). It could base itself only upon the most advanced strata of the proletariat of those times. Its attempt to win over the peasant masses did not go beyond the merest beginnings.

In the Soviets of 1905, which had a deeper and wider social basis than had the Commune—which was a result of the predominant role of the proletariat as the leading force in the bourgeois revolution and of the sweeping movement of revolt among the peasant masses—a further step was taken towards winning the proletarian dictatorship, the "Democracy for the Toilers." It was for the first time in the form of the Soviet power, which stepped upon the stage of history as a result of the victorious October revolution, that the dictatorship of the proletariat—the only "class that is revolutionary to the last degree, the only true representative and leader of all exploited peoples"—found the perfect form, corresponding to the period of capitalist decline, and of the birth of Socialism; this form can "serve as a lever" to "set free the elements of the new society" and to assume and accomplish the task of building up the new Socialist society.

This symposium contains the finest and most important articles, speeches, and excerpts from the longer works of Lenin, in which he concretises and develops the lessons of the Commune. Throughout all of Lenin's theoretical and practical work there runs like a red thread the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the struggle leading to it, the problem of destroying the exploiters' State and of the revolutionary struggle for "proletarian democracy." After 1905, when it found its historical, epoch-making expression in the power of the Soviets, Lenin moved this problem into the central position in his strategy and tactics. The October Revolution gave the historical proof of the correctness of Lenin's teaching and turned the heritage of the Commune into a reality on an incomparably higher historical level.

Lenin's commentaries to the lessons of the Commune are not historical observations, they are documents of our own time; as a whole they form an imperishable guide to the strategy and tactics of the world proletarian revolution.

PAUL BRAUN.

I

IN MEMORY OF THE COMMUNE

FORTY years have passed since the proclamation of the Paris Commune. According to their custom, the French proletariat are honouring the memory of the revolutionary workers of March 18, 1871, by meetings and demonstrations. At the end of May they will again bring wreaths to the tombs of the Communards who were shot, the victims of the fearful "May Week," and over their graves they will once more take the oath to fight untiringly until their ideas have conquered, until their cause has been completely victorious.

Why do the proletariat, not only in France but throughout the entire world, honour the workers of the Paris Commune as their forerunners? What was the heritage of the Commune?

The Commune broke out spontaneously. No one consciously prepared it in an organised way. The unsuccessful war with Germany, privations during the siege, unemployment among the proletariat and ruin among the petty-bourgeoisie; the indignation of the masses against the upper classes and against the authorities who had displayed their complete incapacity, an indefinable fermentation among the working class, which was discontented with its lot and was striving towards a different social system; the reactionary make-up of the National Assembly, which roused fears as to the fate of the republic—all this and many other things combined to drive the population of Paris to revolution March 18, which unexpectedly placed power in the hands of the National Guard, in the hands of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie which had joined in with it.

This was an event unprecedented in history. Up to that time power had customarily been in the hands of landlords and capitalists, *i.e.*, in the hands of their trusted agents who made up the so-called Government. After the revolution of March 18, when the Thiers Government fled from Paris with its troops, its police and its officials, the people remained masters of the situation and power passed into the hands of the proletariat. But in modern society, enslaved

economically by capital, the proletariat cannot dominate politically unless it breaks the chains which fetter it to capital. This is why the movement of the Commune inevitably had to take on a Socialist colouring, *i.e.*, to begin striving for the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie, the power of capital, to destroy the very *foundations* of the present social order.

At first this movement was extremely indefinite and confused. It was joined by patriots who hoped that the Commune would renew the war with the Germans and bring it to a successful conclusion. It was supported by the small shopkeepers who were threatened with ruin unless there was a postponement of payments on debts and rent (the Government did not want to give them such a postponement but the Commune gave it). Finally, it had, at first, the sympathy of the bourgeois republicans, who feared that the reactionary National Assembly (the "backwoodsmen," ignorant landlords) would restore the monarchy. But the chief role in this movement was of course played by the workers (especially the artisans of Paris), among whom Socialist propaganda had been energetically carried on during the last years of the Second Empire and many of whom even belonged to the First International.

Only the workers remained loyal to the Commune to the end. The bouregois republicans and the petty-bourgeoisie soon broke away from it, the former afraid of the revolutionary Socialist proletarian character of the movement, and the others dropping out when they saw that it was doomed to inevitable defeat. Only the French proletariat supported *their* Government fearlessly and untiringly, they alone fought and died for it, for the cause of the emancipation of the working class, for a better future for all toilers.

Deserted by their allies of yesterday and supported by no one, the Commune was doomed to inevitable defeat. The entire bourgeoisie of France, all the landlords, the stockbrokers, the factory owners, all the great and small robbers, all the exploiters, combined against it. This bourgeois coalition, supported by Bismarck (who released a hundred thousand French soldiers who had been taken prisoner to put down revolutionary Paris), succeeded in rousing the backward peasants and the petty bourgeoisie of the provinces against the proletariat of Paris, and in surrounding half of Paris with a ring of steel (the other half was held by the German army). In some of the larger cities in France (Marseilles, Lyons, St. Etienne, Dijon, etc.) the workers also attempted to seize power, to proclaim the Commune, and come

to the help of Paris, but these attempts soon failed. Paris, which had first raised the flag of proletarian revolt, was left to its own resources and doomed to certain destruction.

For the victory of the social revolution, at least two conditions are necessary: a high development of productive forces and the preparedness of the proletariat. But in 1871 neither of these conditions was present. French capitalism was still only slightly developed, and France was at that time mainly a country of petty-bourgeoisie (artisans, peasants, shopkeepers, etc.). On the other hand there was no workers' party, the working class, which, in the mass was unprepared and untrained, did not even clearly visualise its tasks and the methods of fulfilling them. There were no serious political organisations of the proletariat, no strong trade unions and co-operative societies.

But the chief thing which the Commune lacked was the time to think out and undertake the fulfilment of its programme. It hardly had time to start working, when the Versailles government, supported by the entire bourgeoisie, opened military operations against Paris. The Commune had to think first of all of defence. Right up to the very end, May 21-23, it had no time to think seriously of anything else.

In spite of such unfavourable conditions, in spite of the brevity of its existence, the Commune found time to carry out some measures which sufficiently characterise its real significance and aims. The Commune replaced the standing army, that blind weapon in the hands of the ruling classes, by the armed people. It proclaimed the separation of church from State, abolished the State support of religious bodies (*i.e.*, State salaries for priests), gave popular education a purely secular character, and in this way struck a severe blow at the gendarmes in priestly robes. In the purely social sphere the Commune could do very little, but this little nevertheless clearly shows its character as a popular, workers' Government. Night work in bakeries was forbidden, the system of fines, this system of legalised robbery of the workers, was abolished. Finally, the famous decree was issued according to which all factories, works and workshops which had been abandoned or stopped by their owners, were to be handed over to associations of workers in order to resume production. And, as if to emphasise its character as a truly democratic proletarian Government, the Commune decreed that the salaries of all ranks in the administration and the government should not exceed the normal wages of a worker, and in no case should exceed 6,000 francs per year.

All these measures showed with sufficient clearness that the Commune was a deadly menace to the old world, founded on slavery and exploitation. Therefore bourgeois society could not sleep peacefully so long as the Red Flag of the proletariat waved over the Paris City Hall. When at last the organised force of the Government had managed to defeat the poorly organised forces of the revolution, the Bonapartist generals who had been beaten by the Germans and who were brave only when fighting their defeated countrymen, these French Rennenkampfs and Meller-Sakomelskys, organised such a slaughter as Paris had never known. About 30,000 Parisians were killed by the ferocious soldiery, about 45,000 were arrested and many of these were afterwards executed, thousands were imprisoned or exiled. In all, Paris lost about 100,000 of its sons, including the best workers of all trades.

The bourgeoisie were satisfied. "Now we have finished with Socialism for a long time," said their leader, the bloodthirsty dwarf, Thiers, after the blood-bath which he and his generals had arranged for the proletariat of Paris. But these bourgeois crows cawed in vain. Six years after the suppression of the Commune, when many of its fighters were still pining in prison or in exile, a new workers' movement rose in France. A new Socialist generation, enriched by the experience of their predecessors and no whit discouraged by their defeat, picked up the flag which had dropped from the hands of the fighters of the Commune and bore it boldly and confidently forward, with cries of: "Long live the social revolution! Long live the Commune!" And a few years after that, the new workers' party and the agitation raised by it throughout the country, compelled the ruling classes to release the imprisoned Communards, who were still in the hands of the government.

The memory of the fighters of the Commune is not only honoured by the workers of France but by the proletariat of the whole world, for the Commune did not fight for any local or narrow national aim, but for the freedom of toiling humanity, of all the downtrodden and oppressed. As the foremost fighter for the social revolution, the Commune has won sympathy wherever there is a proletariat struggling and suffering. The picture of its life and death, the sight of a workers' government which seized the capital of the world and kept it in its hands for over two months, the spectacle of the heroic struggle of the proletariat and its sufferings after defeat—all this has raised the spirit of millions of workers, aroused their hopes and attracted their sym-

pathies to the side of socialism. The thunder of the cannon in Paris awakened the most backward strata of the proletariat from deep slumber, and everywhere gave impetus to the growth of revolutionary Socialist propaganda. This is why the cause of the Commune did not die. It lives to the present day in every one of us.

The cause of the Commune is the cause of the social revolution. The cause of the complete political and economic emancipation of the toilers. It is the cause of the proletariat of the whole world. And in this sense it is immortal.

(*Rabochaya Gazeta*, No. 4-5, April 28 (15), 1911.)

II

LESSONS OF THE COMMUNE*

AFTER the *coup d'état* which crowned the Revolution of 1848, France came for eighteen years under the yoke of the Napoleonic regime. This regime reduced the country not only to economic ruin, but also to national humiliation. The proletariat which rose against the old regime took upon itself two tasks: a general national, and a class task—the liberation of France from the German invasion, and the socialist liberation of the workers from capitalism. This combination of two tasks is the most original feature of the Commune.

The bourgeoisie had established "the government of national defence," and the proletariat had to fight under its leadership for national independence. In reality, this was a government of "national betrayal" ordained, as it thought, to fight the Paris proletariat. But the proletariat did not realise this, for it was blinded by patriotic illusions. The patriotic idea had its origin in the Great Revolution of the eighteenth century; the minds of the socialists of the Commune were under its spell, and Blanqui, for instance, a true revolutionary and an ardent advocate of socialism, could not find a more suitable title for his newspaper than the bourgeois cry: "Our Country is in Danger!"

* On March 18, 1908, an international meeting took place in Geneva in connection with three proletarian anniversaries: the 25th anniversary of Marx's death, the 60th anniversary of the March Revolution 1848, and the anniversary of the Paris Commune. Comrade Lenin spoke on behalf of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party on the significance of the Commune.

It is this combination of contradictory tasks—patriotism and socialism—which constituted the fatal error of the French Socialists. Already in the Manifesto of the International, September, 1870, Marx warned the French proletariat not to be carried away by the false national idea: profound changes had taken place since the time of the Great Revolution, class differences had become more acute, and although at that time the struggle against the reaction of the whole of Europe united the whole revolutionary nation, the proletariat of the present time can no longer unite its interests with the interests of other classes hostile to it: let the bourgeoisie bear the responsibility for the national humiliation—it is the business of the proletariat to fight for the Socialist liberation of labour from the yoke of the bourgeoisie.

And true enough, the idea underlying bourgeois "patriotism" was not slow in revealing itself. Having concluded a shameful peace with the Prussians, the Versailles Government devoted itself to its direct task—it tried to prevent the arming of the Paris proletariat which it dreaded. The workers replied by proclaiming the Commune and Civil War.

Although the Socialist proletariat was divided into many sects, the Commune was a brilliant example of the capacity of the proletariat to unite for the realisation of democratic tasks to which the bourgeoisie could only pay lip service. Without any special complicated legislation, the proletariat which had seized power, carried out simply and practically the democratisation of the social order, did away with bureaucracy, and had all officials elected by the people.

But two errors robbed the brilliant victory of its fruit. The proletariat stopped half-way: instead of proceeding with the "expropriation of the expropriators," it was carried away by dreams of establishing supreme justice in the country, based on the common national task. For instance, institutions such as the bank were not seized; the theory of the Proudhonists re "equitable exchange," etc., still held sway among the Socialists. The second error was unnecessary magnanimity of the proletariat: instead of annihilating its enemies, it endeavoured to exercise moral influence on them; it did not attach the right value to the importance of purely military activity in civil war, and instead of crowning its victory in Paris by a determined advance on Versailles, it hesitated and gave time to the Versailles government to gather its dark forces and to prepare for the bloody May week.

But with all its errors, the Commune is the greatest example of the greatest proletarian movement of the nineteenth century. Marx valued very highly the historical importance of the Commune: if, during the treacherous raid of the Versailles gang on the arms of the Paris proletariat the workers had given them up without a fight, the disastrous effect of the demoralisation which such weakness would have brought into the proletarian movement would have been much more serious than the injury from the losses suffered by the working class in the fight while defending its arms. Great as were the sacrifices of the Commune, they are redeemed by its importance for the general proletarian struggle: it stirred up the socialist movement throughout Europe, it demonstrated the value of civil war, it dispersed patriotic illusions and shattered the naive faith in the common national aspirations of the bourgeoisie. The Commune has taught the European proletariat to deal concretely with the problems of the Socialist revolution.

A lesson was taught the proletariat which it is not likely to forget. The working class will make use of it, as was already the case in Russia during the December insurrection.*

The epoch which preceded and prepared the Russian revolution was somewhat similar to the epoch of the Napoleonic rule in France. In Russia, too, the autocratic clique had reduced the country to the horrors of economic ruin and national humiliation. But the revolution could not break out for a long time—not till the social development had created conditions for a mass movement, and, in spite of their heroism, the isolated attacks on the government in the pre-revolutionary period came to naught owing to the indifference of the masses. Only Social-Democracy,† by its persistent and systematic work, educated the masses up to the highest form of struggle—mass demonstrations and civil war.

It was able to eradicate "common national" and "patriotic" aberrations in the ranks of the young proletariat, and when with its direct intervention, it was possible to make the Tsar proclaim the Manifesto of October 17, the proletariat took up energetic preparation for the further inevitable stage of the revolution—armed insurrection. Free from common "national" illusions, it concentrated its class forces in its mass organisations—the Soviets of workers and soldiers deputies, etc. And, in spite of all the differences between the aims

* December insurrection, 1905.

† In 1908, the Bolsheviks were in the ranks of Social-Democracy. At that time the word "Social-Democracy" was not an opprobrious term.

and tasks confronting the Russian Revolution and those of the French Revolution of 1871, the Russian proletariat had to resort to the same means of struggle which the Paris Commune had initiated—civil war. Bearing in mind its lessons, the proletariat knew that it must not disdain peaceful weapons of struggle—they serve its everyday interests, they are essential during the preparing of revolutions—neither must it ever forget that under certain conditions the class struggle assumes forms of armed struggle and civil war; there are times when the interest of the proletariat demand ruthless annihilation of its enemies in open battle. The French proletariat was the first to demonstrate this in the Commune, and it was brilliantly confirmed by the Russian proletariat in the December insurrection.

These magnificent insurrections of the working class were crushed, but there will be another insurrection in the face of which the forces of the enemies of the proletariat will prove impotent, an insurrection in which the Socialist proletariat will be victorious.

(*Zagranichnaya Gazeta*, No. 2, March 23, 1908.)

III

EXCERPT FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO THE RUSSIAN EDITION OF THE LETTERS OF KARL MARX TO L. KUGELMANN

. . . Marx's appraisal of the Commune is the crowning point of his letters to Kugelmann. This appraisal acquires special importance when we contrast it with the arguments of the Right Wing of Russian Social-Democracy. After December, 1905, Plekhanov exclaimed like a coward, "You should not have taken to arms!" yet he was immodest enough to compare himself to Marx. Marx too, he said, in 1870, put the brakes on the revolution.

Yes, Marx did put the brakes on. But see what a gulf Plekhanov opens up between himself and Marx by making this comparison!

In November, 1905, a month before the first wave of the Russian Revolution reached its climax, Plekhanov not only did not warn the proletariat against insurrection, but on the contrary, strongly urged the necessity both of learning to master arms and of arming. But

when a month later the struggle flared up, Plekhanov, without making the slightest attempt to analyse its significance, its place in the general course of the movement, its inner connection with the preceding forms of the struggle, hastened to play the penitent intellectual and exclaimed, "You shouldn't have taken to arms!"

In September, 1870, six months before the beginning of the Commune, Marx sent a direct warning to the French workers. Rebellion would be madness, he wrote in the well-known manifesto of the International. In advance of events, he exposed the nationalistic illusions concerning the possibility of a movement to revive the spirit of 1792. He was able, not after the event but several months beforehand, to say, "You must not take up arms."

And what was his attitude when this attempt, which was hopeless according to his own declaration of September, began to turn into a reality in March, 1871? Did Marx take advantage of this great act (as Plekhanov did of the December events) simply to deal a blow at his enemies, the Proudhonists and Blanquists, who were the leaders of the Commune? Or did he scold like a school governess and gloatingly says, "I told you so, I warned you, now you see what you got for your romantic flights, and your revolutionary ravings"? Or did he dismiss them, as Plekhanov did the fighters of December, with the smug sermon of the Philistine, "You shouldn't have taken up arms"?

No! On April 12, 1871, Marx writes an enthusiastic letter to Kugelmann, a copy of which we should like to see hanging on the wall of every Russian Social-Democrat, of every literate Russian worker.

Although in September, 1870, Marx said insurrection would be madness, in April, 1871, in view of the mass character of the uprising, his attitude becomes that of a participant devoting the greatest attention to mighty, significant events which mark a step forward in the international revolutionary movement.

This is an attempt, he writes, not simply to transfer the bureaucratic and military machine to other hands, but to destroy it. And he sings a real *hosanna* to the heroic workers of Paris, led by Proudhonists and Blanquists. "What flexibility," he writes, "what historical initiative, what capacity for self-sacrifice in these Parisians!" (Page 75) . . . "History knows no parallel example of heroism!"

Marx sets the historical initiative of the masses above all else. . . . And as a participant in the struggle of the masses, which he felt with all the ardour and passion native to him, Marx brings himself to

criticise the concrete steps of the "madly brave" Parisians, "ready to storm Heaven. . . ."

Oh, how our present-day "realist" Marxist sages, who are busy disparaging "revolutionary romanticism" in the Russia of 1906-1907, would have ridiculed Marx then! How these people would have mocked at the materialist, the economist, the enemy of Utopias, who bows in reverence before the "attempt to storm the heavens! . . ."

But Marx was not filled with the profound wisdom of those pen-pushers who fear to discuss the technique of the highest forms of revolutionary struggle. He takes up these technical questions. "Is it time to attack or to stand on the defensive?" he asks, as if it were a question of military preparations just outside the gates of London. And he answers the query: attack, by all means. "They should have immediately marched on Versailles. . . ."

That was written in April, 1871, a few weeks before the violent bloody May. . . .

"You should have marched immediately on Versailles!" said Marx to the rebels who had begun the "mad" work of "storming Heaven."

"You should not have taken to arms, to resist by force the attempts to wrest the freedom that had been won," said Plekhanov in December, 1905.

"The second mistake"—Marx continues his technical criticism—"was that the Central Committee (note that by this he means the military leadership, since he refers to the Central Committee of the National Guard) gave up its authority too soon."

Marx was able to warn the leaders against a premature uprising. But his relation to the proletariat in their attempt to "storm Heaven" was that of the practical adviser, the participant in the struggle of the masses who, regardless of the false theories and the errors of Blanqui and Proudhon, were raising the entire movement on to a higher level.

"Whatever happens," he writes, "the present uprising of Paris, even if it succumbs to the wolves, to the swine and base dogs of the old society, stands as the most glorious feat of our party since the June insurrection."

And Marx did not hide a single mistake of the Commune from the proletariat. He dedicated to this heroic feat a work which remains even to-day the best guide in the struggle for the "heavens," and the most terrible bogey for the Liberal and Radical "swine."

Plekhanov dedicated to the December insurrection a work which has practically become the gospel of the Cadets.*

Apparently, Kugelmann replied to Marx in terms of doubt, pointing to the hopelessness of the undertaking and referring to realism in contrast to romanticism; at any rate, he made a comparison between the Commune with its uprising and the peaceful demonstration in Paris, of June 13, 1849.

For this, Kugelmann was immediately (April 17, 1871) and fittingly reproved by Marx.

"It would be very easy indeed to make world history," he writes, "if the struggle could always be undertaken when the odds are always in our favour."

In September, 1870, Marx said insurrection would be madness. But when the masses had once risen, Marx wants to march with them, learn along with them in the struggle itself, but not preach sermons to them. He understands that an attempt in advance to define the odds with absolute precision would be either charlatanism or hopeless pedantry. He puts above everything else the fact that the working class has taken the initiative and is heroically, self-sacrificingly making world history. Marx looks at history from the point of view of those who have to make history without any possibility of infallibly figuring out the odds in advance, not from the view of the petty-bourgeois intellectual, who moralises, "That was easy to foresee," or, "You shouldn't have taken up arms!"

Marx was able to appreciate the fact that there are moments in history when a desperate struggle of the masses, even for a hopeless cause, is essential for the further training of those masses and their preparation for the next struggle.

To our present quasi-Marxists, who delight in quoting Marx in calumniation of his genius, in order to get only his appraisal of the past, without having the ability to create the future—to them such a statement of the question is quite incomprehensible, even foreign in principle. Plekhanov too did not raise this question after December, 1905, when he preached his sermon.

But this is just the question which Marx raises, without for a moment forgetting that in September, 1870, he himself had said that insurrection would be madness.

"The bourgeois dogs in Versailles," he writes, "faced the Parisians with this alternative: to take up the struggle or to succumb without

* Constitutional Democrats. The Russian bourgeois liberals.—*Editor.*

a fight. Had it adopted the second choice, the demoralisation of the working class would have been a far greater misfortune than the loss of any number of leaders."

With this we may close our brief survey of Marx's teaching, given in his letters to Kugelmann, as to the policy worthy of the proletariat.

IV

EXCERPT FROM "STATE AND REVOLUTION"

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871 : MARX'S ANALYSIS

1. *In what lay the Heroism of the Attempt of the Communards?*

It is well-known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months before the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers that an attempt to overthrow the Government would be the folly of despair. But when, in March, 1871, the decisive struggle was *forced* upon the workers and they accepted it, when the rising had become a fact, Marx greeted the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of the unfavourable auguries. Marx did not stiffen into an attitude of pedantic condemnation of the "untimely" movement, as did the ill-famed Russian renegade from Marxism, Plekhanov, who in November, 1905, wrote in a spirit of encouragement of the struggle of the workers and peasants, but after December, 1905, quavered out, liberal-fashion: "You should not have taken arms."

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards who, to use his words, were "storming Heaven." Although it failed in its objective, he saw in the mass revolutionary movement an historical experiment of gigantic import, a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, a practical step, more important than hundreds of programmes and discussions. To analyse this experiment, to draw from it lessons in tactics, to test his own theory in the new light it afforded, such was the task Marx set himself.

The only "correction" which Marx thought it necessary to make in the Communist Manifesto, he made on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Communards.

The last preface to the new German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, signed by both its authors, Karl Marx and Friedrich

Engels, is dated June 24, 1872. In this preface the authors say that the programme of the Communist Manifesto "is now, in places, out of date."

> " . . . In particular," they continue, "the Commune has demonstrated that the 'working class cannot simply take possession of the ready-made machinery of the State and set it going for its own ends.'"

The authors borrowed words within the second quotation marks in this passage from Marx's book on *The Civil War in France*.

Thus, Marx and Engels considered this principal and fundamental lesson of the Paris Commune to be of such enormous importance that they introduced it as a vital correction into the *Communist Manifesto*.

It is most characteristic that it is precisely this essential correction which has been distorted by the opportunists, and its real meaning, probably, is not clear to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the readers of the *Communist Manifesto*. We shall deal with this distortion more fully further on, in a chapter especially devoted to distortions. It will be sufficient here to note, that the current, vulgar "interpretation" of Marx's famous utterance, quoted above, is contained in the assertion that Marx here emphasises the idea of a slow evolution in contra-distinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

As a matter of fact, *exactly the reverse is the case*. Marx's idea is that the working class must *break up*, *shatter* the "existing machinery of the State," and not confine itself merely to taking possession of it.

On April 12, 1871, *i.e.*, at the very time of the Commune, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

> ". . . If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will see that I declare the next attempt of the French Revolution to be: not merely to transfer the bureaucratic and military machinery from one set of hands to another—as has occurred hitherto—but to *break it up* (Marx's italics—the original is *zerbrechen*); and this is the preliminary condition of any real people's revolution on the continent. This is exactly what the attempt of our heroic Parisian comrades implies." (*Neue Zeit*, XX., i, 1901-1902, p. 709.)

In these words, "to break up the bureaucratic and military machinery of the State," is contained, briefly formulated, the principal lesson of Marxism on the tasks of the proletariat in relation to the

State during a revolution. And it is just this lesson which has not only been forgotten, but completely distorted by the prevailing Kautskian "interpretation" of Marxism!

It is interesting particularly to note two points in the observations of Marx quoted above: First, he confines his conclusions to the Continent. This was natural in 1871, when England was still the model of a purely capitalist country, without a military machine and, in large measure, without a bureaucracy. Hence Marx excluded England, where a revolution, even a people's revolution, seemed, and was then, possible, without the preliminary condition of the destruction of "the existing machinery of the State."

To-day, in 1917, in the epoch of the first great imperialist war, this observation of Marx no longer holds good. Both England and America, the greatest and last representatives in the whole world of Anglo-Saxon "liberty," in the sense of the absence of militarism and bureaucracy, have to-day completely sunk into the general European muddy, bloody morass of military and bureaucratic institutions which subordinate everything to themselves and crush everything beneath them. To-day, both in England and in America, the "preliminary condition of any real people's revolution" is the *break-up*, the *shattering* of the "existing machinery of the State" (which has been brought in those countries, between 1914 and 1917, to general "European" imperialist perfection).

Secondly, particular attention is merited by the extremely profound remark of Marx, that the destruction of the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the State is "the preliminary condition of any real people's revolution." This idea of a "people's" revolution seems strange on Marx's lips, and the Russian Plekhanovists and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve who wish to be considered Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a slip of the pen. They have reduced Marxism to such a state of wretched "liberal" distortion, that nothing exists for them beyond the distinction between bourgeois and proletarian revolution: and even that distinction they understand in a lifeless manner.

If we take as an example the revolutions of the twentieth century, we shall, of course, have to recognise both the Portuguese and the Turkish revolutions as bourgeois. Neither, however, is a "people's revolution," inasmuch as in neither did the mass of the people, its enormous majority, come forward actively and independently, with its own economic and political demands. On the other hand, the

Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905-1907, although it presented no such "brilliant" success as at times fell to the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions, was undoubtedly a "real people's" revolution, since the mass of the people, the majority, the lowest social "depths," crushed down by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and placed on the entire course of the revolution the stamp of *their own* demands, and of *their own* attempts to build up in their own way a new society in place of the old society that had to be shattered.

In 1871, in no single country on the Continent did the proletariat constitute the majority of the people. A "People's" revolution, sweeping the actual majority into its current, could be such, only by embracing both the proletariat and the peasantry. Both classes then constitute the "people." Both classes are united by the circumstance that the "military and bureaucratic machinery of the State" oppresses, crushes, exploits them. To *shatter* this machinery, to *break it up*—this is in the true interest of the "people," of its majority—the workers and most of the peasants—this is the "preliminary condition" of a free alliance of the poorest peasants with the proletarians; while, without such an alliance, democracy is unstable and socialist transformation impossible.

Towards such a union, as is well known, the Paris Commune was making its way, though it did not reach its goal owing to a number of circumstances, internal and external.

Consequently, when speaking of "a real people's revolution," Marx, without in the least forgetting the peculiar characteristics of the petty-bourgeoise (he spoke of them much and often), very carefully took into account the actual interrelation of classes in most of the Continental European States in 1871. On the other hand, he came to the conclusion that the "shattering" of the machinery of the State is demanded by the interests both of the workers and of the peasants, that it unites them, that it confronts them with the common task of destroying the "parasite" and replacing it by something new.

By what exactly?

2. *What is to replace the Shattered Machinery of State?*

In 1847, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx still answered this question in a purely abstract manner, stating the problems rather than the methods of solving them. To replace this machinery by the "proletariat organised as the ruling class," by the "conquest of democracy"—such was the answer of the *Communist Manifesto*.

Without resorting to Utopias, Marx waited for the *experience* of the mass movement to produce the answer to the problem as to the concrete forms which would be assumed by this organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class, and as to the exact manner in which this organisation will be combined with the most complete and most consistent "conquest of democracy."

Marx subjected the experience of the Commune, meagre as it was, to the most careful analysis in his *Civil War in France*. Let us quote the most important passages of this work:

> There developed in the nineteenth century "the centralised state power," originating in the Middle Ages, "with its ubiquitous organs: a standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy and the judicial hierarchy." With the development of class antagonism between capital and labour, "the State assumes more and more the character of a social power for the suppression of labour, the character of a machine for class domination. After every revolution marking a certain advance in the class struggle, the purely oppressive character of the State becomes more and more apparent." The State power, after the revolution of 1848-1849, becomes "the national weapon of capital in its war against labour." The Second Empire consolidates this.
>
> "The Commune was the direct antithesis of the Empire." "It was a definite form . . . of a republic which was to abolish not only the monarchist form of class rule, but also class rule itself. . ... "
>
> What was this "definite" form of the proletarian, the Socialist republic? What was the state it was beginning to create?
>
> "The first decree of the Commune ordered the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by the armed nation."
>
> This demand now figures in the programme of every party calling itself Socialist. But the value of their programme is best shown by the behaviour of our Socialists-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who, immediately after the revolution of February 27th* refused to carry this point into effect!
>
> ". . . The Commune was formed of municipal representatives elected by universal suffrage in the various districts of Paris. They were responsible and could be recalled at any time. The

* March 12th, 1917.—*Editor.*

majority were, naturally, working men or acknowledged representatives of the working class. . . ."

"... The police, until then merely an instrument of the State government, was immediately stripped of all its political functions and turned into the responsible, and at any time replaceable, organ of the Commune. . . The same applied to the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune down, public service was to be discharged at the *wage rate of a working man*. All privileges and representation allowances attached to the high offices of the State disappeared along with the offices themselves. . . . Having removed the standing army and the police, these instruments of the material power of the old government, the Commune immediately set about breaking up the instrument of spiritual oppression, the power of the priests. . . . The judicial functionaries lost their sham independence. . . . In future, they were to be elective, responsible and subject to recall. . . ."

Thus the Commune would appear to have replaced the shattered machinery of the State "only" by a fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be fully elective and subject to recall. But, as a matter of fact this "only" signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by others of a fundamentally different order. Here we have an example of the "transformation of quantity into quality": democracy, carried to its logical conclusion, is transformed from capitalist democracy into proletarian democracy, from the State (that is, a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is in reality no longer a State.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush its resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons of its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. But the organ of suppression is now the majority of the population, and not the minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom and wage-labour. And, once the majority of the people *itself* has suppressed its oppressors, a "special force" for suppression is *no longer necessary*. In this sense the state begins to die out. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, chiefs of a standing army), the majority can itself directly fulfil all these functions; and the more the

discharge of the functions of State power devolves upon the people, the less need is there for the existence of the State itself.

In this connection the measure adopted by the Commune and emphasised by Marx, is particularly noteworthy: the abolition of all special and of all financial privileges for officials, the reduction of the remuneration of *all* servants of the State to the "*Wage rate of a working man.*" Here, more clearly than anywhere else, is shown the *change* from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to the democracy of the oppressed classes, from the state as a "special force" for the suppression of a given class, to the suppression of the oppressors by the *whole force* of the majority of the people—the workers and the peasants. And it is precisely on this most obvious point, perhaps the most important so far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the teachings of Marx have most been forgotten. In the popular commentaries, whose number is legion, no mention is made of this. It is "proper" to keep silent about it as though it were a piece of old-fashioned naïveté; just as the Christians, after Christianity had attained the position of a State religion, "forgot" the *naïveté* of primitive Christianity with its democratic and revolutionary spirit.

The reduction of the pay of the highest state officials seems "simply" the demand of naive, primitive spirit of democracy. One of the "founders" of modern opportunism, the former Social-Democrat, E. Bernstein, has more than once exercised his talents in the repetition of vulgar bourgeois jeers at "primitive" democracy. Like all opportunists, like the present Kautskyites, he completely failed to understand that, first of all, the transition from capitalism to Socialism is *impossible* without a certain "return" to "primitive" democracy (for how otherwise is it possible to pass on to the discharge of State functions by the majority of the population and by every individual of the population ?); and, secondly, he forgets that "primitive democracy" on the basis of capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same primitive democracy as in pre-historic or pre-capitalist times.

Capitalist culture has created large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., *and on this basis* the great majority of the functions of the old "State power" have been so simplified and can be reduced to such simple operations of registration, filing and checking, that they will be quite within the capacity of every literate person, and it will be possible to perform them for the

"wage rate of an ordinary working man," which circumstance can (and must) strip those functions of every shadow of privilege, of every appearance of "official superiority."

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall *at any time*, their salaries reduced to the current "wage rate of the working man"—these simple and "self-evident" democratic measures, completely unite the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, and at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to Socialism. These measures concern the State, the purely political reconstruction of society; but, of course, they acquire their whole meaning and significance only in connection with the "expropriation of the expropriators," accomplished or in preparation, *i.e.*, with the transformation of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership. Marx wrote:

> "The Commune realised the slogan of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, by eliminating the two largest items of expenditure—the army and the bureaucracy."

From the peasantry, as from other sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, only an insignificant minority "rises to the top," "make their way in the world" in the bourgeois sense, *i.e.*, become either well-to-do, and bourgeois, or secure and privileged officials. The great majority of the peasants in every capitalist country where the peasantry exists (and the majority of capitalist countries are of this kind) is oppressed by the government and longs for its overthrow, longs for "cheap" government. This can be realised *only* by the proletariat, and by realising it, the proletariat at the same time takes a step forward towards the Socialist reconstruction of the State.

3. *The Destruction of Parliamentarism.*

> "The Commune," wrote Marx, "was to have been not a parliamentary, but a working corporation, legislative and executive at one and the same time. . . ."
>
> ". . . Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress (*vertreten und zertreten*) the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, organised in communes, as a means of securing the necessary workers, overseers and book-keepers for its enterprise in the same way as individual suffrage serves any other employer for this purpose."

This remarkable criticism of parliamentarism passed in 1871 also now belongs to the "forgotten words" of Marxism, thanks to the predominance of social-chauvinism and opportunism. Cabinet ministers and professional parliamentarians, traitors to the proletariat, the "business" Socialists of our day have left all criticism of parliamentarism to the Anarchists, and, on this remarkably intelligent ground have denounced *all* criticism of parliamentarism as "Anarchism"! It is not surprising that the proletariat of the most "advanced" parliamentary countries, experiencing a feeling of disgust at the sight of "Socialists," like Scheidemann, David, Legien, Sembat, Renaudel, Henderson, Vandervelde, Stauning, Branting, Bissolati and Company, have been lending their sympathies more and more to Anarcho-Syndicalism, in spite of the fact that it is but the twin brother of opportunism.

But to Marx, revolutionary dialectics were never the empty, fashionable phrase, the toy rattle, which Plekhanov, Kautsky and others have made of it. Marx knew how to ruthlessly slay the Anarchists because of their inability to make use even of the "sty" of bourgeois parliamentarism, especially when the situation is obviously not revolutionary, but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarism to really revolutionary proletarian criticism.

To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to represent and oppress the people in parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.

But if the question of the State is raised, if parliamentarism is regarded as one of the institutions of the State, from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in this sphere, what then is the way out of parliamentarism? How can it be dispensed with?

Again and again it must be repeated: The teaching of Marx based on the study of the Commune, has been so completely forgotten that to the present day "Social-Democrat" (read: traitor to Socialism) any criticism of parliamentarism, other than Anarchist or reactionary, seems quite unintelligible.

The escape from parliamentarism is to be found, of course, not in the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but in the conversion of the representative institutions from mere talking shops into "working" bodies: "The Commune was to have been, not a parliamentary, but a working institution, legislative and executive at one and the same time. . . ."

4. *The Organisation of National Unity.*

"... In the brief outline of national organisation which the Commune had had no time to develop, it was stated quite clearly that the Commune was to become ... the political form of even the smallest village."

From these Communes would be elected the "National Assembly" at Paris.

"... The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government, were not to be abolished (such an assertion is a deliberate falsehood), but were to be discharged by communal, that is, strictly responsible, officials. The unity of the nation was not to be destroyed, but, on the contrary, organised by means of the communal structure. The unity of the nation was to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity and yet desired to be independent of, and superior to, the nation. In fact it was but a parasitic excrescence on the body of the nation. ... The problem consisted in this: whilst amputating the purely repressive organs of the old government power, to wrest its justifiable functions from an authority which claimed to be above society, and to hand them over to the responsible servants of society."

To what extent the opportunists of contemporary Social-Democracy have failed to understand, or perhaps it would be more true to say, did not want to understand, these observations of Marx, is best shown by the notorious book of the renegade Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*. It is just in connection with the very passage from Marx quoted above, that Bernstein wrote, that this programme "in its political content displays, in all its essential features, the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon. ... In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the 'petty-bourgeois' Proudhon (Bernstein puts the word 'petty-bourgeois' in quotation marks in order to make them sound ironical), on these points their ways of thinking resemble each other as closely as could be."

... There is no trace of federalism in the above-quoted observations of Marx regarding the experience of the Commune. Marx agrees with Proudhon precisely on a point which has quite escaped the

opportunist Bernstein. Marx differs from Proudhon just on the point where Bernstein sees their agreement.

Marx agrees with Proudhon in that they both stand for the "demolition" of the contemporary State machinery. This concurrence of Marxism with Anarchism (both with Proudhon and with Bakunin) neither the opportunists nor the Kautskyites wish to see, for on this point they have themselves departed from Marxism.

Marx differs from both Proudhon and Bakunin precisely on the point of federalism (not to speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism follows as a matter of principle, from the petty-bourgeois views of Anarchism. Marx is a centralist. And in the above-quoted observations of his there is no deviation from centralism. Only people imbued with philistine "superstitious faith" in the State can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois State for the destruction of centralism.

But how, if the proletariat and the poorest peasantry take the power of the State into their own hands, organise themselves freely into communes, and *combine* the action of all the communes in striking at capital, in crushing the resistance of the capitalists, in transferring private property in railways, factories, land and so forth, to the *entire* nation, to the whole of society? Will that not be centralism? Will that not be the most consistent democratic centralism? And proletarian centralism at that?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive the possibility of voluntary centralism, of a voluntary union of the communes into a nation, a voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes in the course of the destruction of bourgeois supremacy and the bourgeois machinery of State. Like all philistines, Bernstein can imagine centralism only as something from above, to be imposed and maintained solely by means of bureaucracy and militarism.

Marx, as though foreseeing the possibility of the perversion of his ideas, purposely emphasises that the accusation against the Commune that it desired to destroy the unity of the nation, to abolish the central power, was a deliberate falsehood. Marx purposely uses the phrase "to organise the unity of the nation," so as to contrast purposeful, democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois military, bureaucratic centralism.

But none so deaf as he who will not hear. And the opportunists of modern Social-Democracy do not want to hear of destroying the State power, of cutting off the parasite.

5. *The Destruction of the Parasite State.*

We have already quoted the appropriate passages from Marx on this subject, and must now supplement them:

> "It is generally the fate of new creations of history to be mistaken for old and even defunct forms of social life to which they may bear some likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which is breaking up the modern State, was regarded as the resurrection of the mediæval communes . . . as a union of small States (Montesquieu, the Girondins) . . . as an exaggerated form of the old struggle against over-centralisation. . . .
>
> ". . . The communal constitution would have restored to the social body all those forces hitherto devoured by the parasitic excrescence called "the State," which feeds upon society and hinders its free movements. By this alone the regeneration of France would have been advanced. . . .
>
> "The communal constitution would have brought the rural producers under the intellectual leadership of the chief towns of each district, and would have secured for them there, in the persons of the town workers, the natural representatives of their interests. The very existence of the Commune would have involved, as a matter of course, local self-government, but no longer as a counter-balance to the power of the State, which now would have become superfluous."

"The annihilation of the power of the State," which was a "parasitic excrescence," its "amputation," its "destruction"; "the power of the state now becomes superfluous"—these are the expressions used by Marx regarding the State when he appraised and analysed the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now one has to "excavate," as it were, in order to bring uncorrupted Marxism to the knowledge of the masses. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx witnessed, have been forgotten just at the moment when the time had arrived for the succeeding great proletarian revolutions.

> "The variety of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which found their expression in it, proves that it was a highly flexible political form, whereas all previous forms of government had been, in

their essence, repressive. Its true secret was this: it was essentially *a government of the working class*, the result of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form, at last discovered, under which the economic liberation of labour could proceed.

"Without this last condition the communal constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion."

The Utopians had engaged in the "discovery" of the political forms under which the Socialist reconstruction of society could take place. The Anarchists turned away from the question of political forms altogether. The opportunists of modern Social-Democracy accepted the bourgeois political forms of a parliamentary democratic state as the limit which cannot be overstepped; they bruised their foreheads in praying before this idol, denouncing as Anarchism every attempt to *destroy* these forms.

Marx deduced from the whole history of Socialism and political struggle that the State was bound to disappear, and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from the State to the non-State) would be the "proletariat organised as the ruling class." But Marx did not undertake the task of *discovering* the political *forms* of this future stage. He limited himself to an exact observation of French history, its analysis and the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led, viz., that matters were moving towards the *destruction* of the bourgeois state machine.

And when the mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat burst forth, Marx, in spite of the failure of that movement, in spite of its brief span of life and its patent weakness, began to study what political forms *it had disclosed.*

The Commune is the form "at last discovered" by the proletarian revolution, under which the economic liberation of labour can take effect.

The Commune is the first attempt of a proletarian revolution to break up the bourgeois State machine and the political form, "at last discovered," which can and must *take the place* of the one broken up.

We shall see below that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different surroundings and under different circumstances, continued the work of the Commune and confirmed the historic analysis made by the genius of Marx.

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER FOUR

SUPPLEMENTARY EXPLANATIONS BY ENGELS

MARX gave the fundamentals on the subject of the meaning of the experience of the Commune. Engels returned to the same question repeatedly, elucidating Marx's analysis and conclusions, sometimes so forcibly throwing other sides of the question into relief that we must dwell on these explanations separately.

1. "*The Housing Question.*"

Already in his work on the *Housing Question* (1872) Engels took into account the experience of the Commune, dwelling repeatedly on the tasks of the revolution in regard to the State.

Speaking of the conversion of the Blanquists, after the Commune and under the influence of its experience, to the principles of Marxism, Engels, in passing, formulates these principles as follows:

> ". . . The necessity of political action by the proletariat and of the proletarian dictatorship as the transition towards the abolition of classes and, with them, of the State. . . ." (p. 55.)

Those addicted to hair-splitting criticism, or bourgeois "exterminators of Marxism," will perhaps discern a contradiction between this recognition of the "abolition of the State" and the repudiation of such a formula as anarchistic, in the passage from the "*Anti-Dühring*." It would not be surprising if the opportunists wrote down Engels, too, as an "Anarchist," for the social-chauvinists are now more and more adopting the fashion of accusing the Internationalists of being Anarchists.

That, together with the abolition of classes, the State will also be abolished—this Marxism has always taught. The well-known passage regarding the "dying out" of the State in *Anti-Dühring* accuses the Anarchists not of being in favour of the abolition of the State, but of preaching that it is possible to abolish the State "overnight."

In view of the fact that the present predominating "Social-Democratic" doctrine completely distorts the relation of Marxism to Anarchism as far as the abolition of the State is concerned, it will be

particularly useful to recall a controversy between Marx and Engels and the Anarchists.

2. *Dispute with the Anarchists.*

This dispute took place in 1873, Marx and Engels contributing articles against the Proudhonists and "autonomists" or "anti-authoritarians" to an Italian Socialist volume of essays, and it was only in 1913 that these articles appeared in German in the *Neue Zeit*. . . .

. . . Engels . . . ridiculed the muddled ideas of the Proudhonists who called themselves "anti-authoritarians," that is, repudiated authority, subordination, power . . . "The anti-authoritarians . . . demand . . . that the political state be abolished at one stroke, even before those social relations which gave birth to it are themselves abolished . . . that the first act of the social-revolution should be to abolish authority."

> "Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? Revolution is undoubtedly the most authoritative thing possible. It is an act in which one section of the population imposes its will on the other by means of rifles, bayonets, cannon, *i.e.*, by highly authoritative means, and the victorious party is inevitably forced to maintain its supremacy by means of that fear which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day had it not relied on the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Are we not, on the contrary, entitled to blame the Commune for not having made sufficient use of this authority? And so: one of two things: either the anti-authoritarians do not know what they are talking about, in which case they merely sow confusion; or they do know, in which case they are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either case they serve only the interests of reaction."

The customary criticism of Anarchism by modern Social-Democrats has been reduced to the purest philistine vulgarity. "We recognise the State, whereas the Anarchists do not!" Naturally, such vulgarity cannot but repel revolutionary working men who think at all. Engels says something different. He emphasises that all Socialists recognise that a State will disappear as a result of the Socialist revolution. He then deals concretely with the question of the revolution—that very

question which, as a rule, the Social-Democrats, because of their opportunism, evade, leaving it, so to speak, exclusively to the Anarchists "to work out." And, dealing with this question, Engels takes the bull by the horns: Should not the Commune have made *more* use of the *revolutionary* power of the State, *i.e.*, of the proletariat armed and organised as the ruling class?

The dominating official Social-Democracy usually dismissed the question as to concrete tasks of the proletariat in the revolution either with a mere philistine shrug, or, at the best, with the evasive sophism, "Wait and see." And the Anarchists were thus justified in saying about such a Social-Democracy, that it had betrayed its task of educating the working class for the revolution. Engels makes use of the experience of the last proletarian revolution for the particular purpose of making a concrete analysis as to what the proletariat should do, and how, in relation both to the banks and to the State.

3. *Letter to Bebel.*

One of the most remarkable, if not *the* most remarkable, observations on the State to be found in the works of Marx and Engels is contained in the following passage from a letter of Engels to Bebel, dated March 18-28, 1875. This letter, we may remark in passing, was, as far as we know, first published by Bebel in the second volume of his memoirs (*My Life*) which appeared in 1911, *i.e.*, thirty-six years after it had been written and dispatched.

Engels wrote the following to Bebel, criticising that same draft of the Gotha programme, which Marx also criticised in his famous letter to Bracke and referring particularly to the question of the State:

> "... The Free Peoples' State has been transformed into a Free State. According to the grammatical meaning of the words, the Free State is one in which the State is free in relation to its citizens, *i.e.*, a State with a despotic government. It would be well to throw overboard all this chatter about the State, especially after the Commune, which was no longer a State in the proper sense of the word. The Anarchists have too long thrown this 'Peoples' State' into our teeth, although already in Marx's work against Proudhon, and then in the Communist Manifesto, it was stated definitely that, with the introduction of the Socialist order of society, the State will dissolve of itself (*sich auflost*), and

disappear." As the State is only a transitional phenomenon which must be made use of in the revolutionary struggle in order forcibly to crush our antagonists, it is pure absurdity to speak of a Free Peoples' State. As long as the proletariat *needs* the State, it needs it, not in the interests of freedom, but for the purpose of crushing its antagonists; and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom, then the State, as such, ceases to exist. We would, therefore, suggest that everywhere the word "State" be replaced by "Community" (*gemeinwesen*), a fine old German word, which corresponds to the French word "Commune" (p. 321-322, German original.)

". . . The Commune was no longer a State in the proper sense of the word." Here is Engels' most important statement, theoretically speaking. After what has been presented above, this statement is perfectly clear. The Commune *ceased* to be a State, in so far as it had to repress, not the majority of the population, but a minority (the exploiters); it had smashed the bourgeois State machine, and, in the place of a *special* repressive force, the population itself came to the fore. All this is a departure from the idea of the State in its proper sense. And had the Commune consolidated itself, the remnants of the State within it would have withered away of themselves: it would not have had to abolish its institutions; they would have ceased to function as soon as nothing would be left for them to do. . . .

4. *The* 1891 *Preface to Marx's "Civil War in France."*

In his preface to the third edition of *The Civil War in France* (this preface is dated March 18, 1891, was was originally published in *Neue Zeit*), Engels, among many other interesting remarks made in passing, concerning the attitude towards the State, gives a remarkably striking resumé of the lessons of the Commune. This resumé, which was given profundity by the whole experience of the period of twenty years separating the author from the Commune, and directed particularly against the "superstitious respect for the State" so widespread in Germany, can justly be called *the last word* of Marxism on the question here dealt with.

. . . Here are the lessons to which Engels attached prime importance:

"... It was just this oppressive power of the former centralised government—the army, the political police, the bureaucracy which Napoleon had created in 1798, and which, from that time onwards, every new government had taken over as a desirable weapon and used against its opponents, which should have fallen throughout France just as it had already fallen in Paris.

"The Commune was forced to realise from the very first that the working class, having come into power, could not continue to operate with the old State machine; in order that the working class might not lose its newly-won supremacy, it must, on the one hand, do away with all of the old machinery of oppression which had hitherto been used against it, and on the other, secure itself against its own deputies and officials by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any time. . . ."

Engels emphasises again and again, that not only in a monarchy, but also in a democratic republic, the state remains the State, *i.e.*, it retains its fundamental and characteristic feature of transforming the officials, "the servants of society," its organs, into the *masters* of society.

"... Against this inevitable feature of all systems of government that have existed hitherto, *viz.*, the transformation of the State and its organs from servants into the masters of society, the Commune used two sure remedies. First, it appointed to all posts, administrative, judicial, educational, persons elected by universal suffrage, at the same time introducing the right of recalling those elected at any time by the decision of their electors. Secondly, it paid all officials, both higher and lower, only such pay as was received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune was 6,000 francs. Thus was created an effective barrier to place-hunting and careerism even apart from the imperative mandate given to deputies in representative institutions, which was introduced by the Commune over and above this. . . ."

Engels approaches here that interesting boundary line where consistent democracy is, on the one hand, *transformed into* Socialism, and where on the other, it *demands* the introduction of Socialism.

For, in order to destroy the State, it is necessary to convert the functions of public service into such simple operations of control and accounting as are within the understanding of the vast majority of the population, and, ultimately, with careerism, it must be made impossible for an "honourable," though unprofitable post in the public service to be used as a jumping-off ground for a highly profitable post in the banks or the joint stock companies, as happens *constantly* in even the freest capitalist countries.

Engels continues:

> ". . . This disruption (*sprengung*) of the old State and its replacement by a new and really democratic one, is described in detail in the third part of the *Civil War*. But it was necessary here to dwell briefly once more upon a few of the features of this replacement, because in Germany the superstitious faith in the State has been carried over from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie, and even of many workers. According to the philosophical conception, the State is the "realisation of the idea," or, transferred into the philosophical realm, the Kingdom of God on earth, the sphere in which eternal Truth and Justice is, or should be, realised. And from this follows the superstitious reverence for the State and for everything pertaining to the State—a superstitious reverence which takes root the more readily as people are accustomed, from their childhood, to think that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society cannot be taken care of in any other way than in the one in existence, *i.e.*, by means of the State and its well-paid officials. People think they are making an extraordinarily big step forward when they rid themselves of faith in a hereditary monarchy and become partisans of a democratic republic. In reality, however, the State is nothing more than a machine for the oppression of one class by another, in a democratic republic no less than in a monarchy. At best the State is an evil, inherited by the proletariat after coming out victorious in the struggle for class supremacy. The victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, will be obliged immediately to amputate the worst sides of this evil, until such time as a new generation, brought up under new and free social conditions, will prove capable of throwing all this State rubbish on the dust-heap."

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER SIX

THE VULGARISATION OF MARX BY THE OPPORTUNISTS

BERNSTEIN, in his famous, or infamous, *Principles of Evolutionary Socialism*, accuses Marxism of Blanquism (an accusation since repeated thousands of times by the opportunists and liberal bourgeoisie in Russia against the representatives of revolutionary Marxism, the Bolsheviks). In this connection Bernstein dwells particularly on Marx's *Civil War in France*, and tries, as we have seen, quite unsuccessfully, to identify Marx's view of the lessons of the Commune with that of Proudhon. Bernstein pays particular attention to Marx's conclusion, emphasised by the latter in his preface of 1872 to the Communist Manifesto, to the effect that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machine, and set it going for its own purposes."

This dictum "pleased" Bernstein so much that he repeated it no less than three times in his book—interpreting it in the most distorted, opportunist sense.

We have seen that Marx means that the working class must shatter, break up, blow up (*sprengen*, blow up, is the expression used by Engels) the whole State machine; whereas, according to Bernstein, it would appear as though Marx by these words warned the working class against excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power.

One cannot imagine a more vulgar and discreditable perversion of Marx's ideas.

. . . Kautsky states the problem in the following way: the victorious proletariat, he says, "will realise the democratic programme," and he formulates its clauses one by one. But of that which the year 1871 taught us about bourgeois democracy being replaced by proletarian democracy—not a syllable. . . .

. . . By evading this question, Kautsky *in reality* makes a concession to opportunism on this most essential point. . . .

Kautsky has not reflected at all on Marx's words: "The Commune should not be a parliamentary, but a working corporation, legislative and executive at one and the same time."

. . . Kautsky has not in the least understood the difference between bourgeois parliamentarism combining democracy (*not for the people*) with bureaucracy (*against the people*), and proletarian democ-

racy, which will take immediate measures to sever bureaucracy at its roots, and which will be able to carry these measures to their logical conclusion, to the complete destruction of bureaucracy, and the complete establishment of democracy for the people.

Kautsky reveals here again the same old " superstitious reverence " for the State and " superstitious faith " in bureaucracy. . . .

Kautsky goes over from Marxism to opportunism, because, under his hands, this destruction of the State machine, which is utterly inacceptable to the opportunists, completely disappears. . . .

The main thing is whether the old State machine (connected by thousands of ties with the bourgeoisie and saturated through and through by routine and inertia), shall remain, or be *broken up* and replaced by a new one. A revolution must consist, not in a new class ruling, governing by means of the *old* State machine, but in this class smashing this machine and ruling, governing by means of a *new* machine. This fundamental idea of Marxism, Kautsky either hushes up or else has entirely failed to understand. . . .

. . . From what Kautsky says, one might think that since elective officials remain under Socialism, bureaucrats and bureaucracy will also remain ! That is entirely incorrect. Marx took the example of the Commune to show that under Socialism the functionaries cease to be " bureaucrats " and " officials "—they change to the degree to which election is supplemented by the right of instant recall, and, in addition, their pay brought down to the level of the pay of the average worker, and furthermore, parliamentary institutions are replaced by " working corporations," *i.e.*, legislative and executive at one and the same time.

All Kautsky's arguments, and particularly his wonderful point that we cannot do without officials even in our parties and trade unions, show that Kautsky repeats the old " arguments " of Bernstein against Marxism in general. Bernstein's renegade book, *Principles of Evolutionary Socialism*, is an attack on the idea of " primitive " democracy, on what he calls " doctrinaire democracy," imperative mandates, functionaries with no remuneration, impotent central representative bodies and so on. . . .

Marx's critical and analytical genius perceived in the practical measures of the Commune, that revolutionary departure of which the opportunists are afraid, and which they do not want to recognise, out of cowardice and out of a reluctance to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the Anarchists do not want to recognise, owing

either to their haste, or a general lack of understanding of the conditions of great social mass transformations in general. . . .

Marx teaches us to avoid both kinds of error; he teaches us unswerving courage in destroying entirely the old State machine; and at the same time shows us how to put the question concretely: The Commune was able, within a few weeks, to *start* building a *new* proletarian State machine by introducing measures to secure the wider democratisation and the uprooting of the bureaucracy. Let us learn revolutionary courage from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures an *indication* of practically urgent and immediately possible measures: and it is by that path that we shall arrive at the complete destruction of bureaucracy.

V

EXCERPT FROM "THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE RENEGADE KAUTSKY"

1. *How Kautsky changed Marx into a deceitful liberal.*

. . . The Paris Commune was a dictatorship of the proletariat, but it was elected by universal suffrage, without depriving the bourgeoisie of the franchise, *i.e.*, "democratically." Kautsky is elated: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is, for Marx, a condition which results necessarily from pure democracy when the proletariat forms the overwhelming majority" (p. 21).

This argument is so amusing that one almost suffers from an *embarras de richesses.* First, it is well-known that the flower of the bourgeoisie, its staff, had run away from Paris to Versailles. There, at Versailles, was also the "Socialist," Louis Blanc—which circumstance, by the way, proves the falseness of Kautsky's assertion that "all schools" of Socialism took part in the Commune. Is it not ridiculous to represent as "pure democracy," with "universal" suffrage, the division of the inhabitants of Paris into two belligerent camps, in one of which was concentrated the entire militant and politically active section of the bourgeoisie?

Second, the Commune was at war with Versailles as the Workers' Government of France against the bourgeois Government. What had "pure democracy" and "universal" suffrage to do with it if Paris

decided the fate of all France! When Marx gave as his opinion that the Commune had committed a mistake in failing to seize the Bank of France, belonging to the whole of France, did he consider the principles and practice of "pure democracy"? Obviously, Kautsky was writing his book in a country where the people are forbidden by the police to act or even to laugh "collectively"—else Kautsky would have been long since annihilated by ridicule.

I beg respectfully to remind Mr. Kautsky, who knows Marx and Engels, by heart, of the following appreciation of the Commune by Engels from the point of view of "pure democracy":

> "Have these gentlemen (the anti-authoritarians) ever seen a revolution? Revolution is undoubtedly the most authoritative thing possible. It is an act in which one section of the population imposes its will upon the other by means of rifles, bayonets, cannon, *i.e.*, by highly authoritative means, and the victorious party is inevitably forced to maintain its rule by means of that fear which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day had it not relied upon the armed authority of the people against the bourgeoisie? Are we not, on the contrary, entitled to blame the Commune for not having made sufficient use of this authority?"

Here you have your "pure democracy!" What ridicule Engels would have heaped upon the head of that vulgar petty-bourgeois, the "Social-Democrat" (in the French sense of the forties of last century, and in the European sense of 1914-18), who would have talked about "pure democracy" in relation to a society divided into classes!

But enough. It is impossible to enumerate all the absurdities uttered by Kautsky, since every phrase in his mouth represents a bottomless pit of apostasy.

Marx and Engels have analysed in a most detailed manner the Commune of Paris, showing that its merit consisted in the attempt to break, to smash up, the existing State machine. Marx and Engels considered this point to be of such importance that they introduced it in 1872 as the only amendment into the partly "obsolete" programme of the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels showed that the Commune was abolishing the army and the bureaucracy, was destroying parliamentarism, was wiping out "that parasitical incubus the State," and so forth; but the all-wise Kautsky, pulling his night-

cap over his ears, repeats the fairy-tale about a "pure democracy," which has been told thousands of times by liberal professors.

2. *Bourgeois and proletarian democracy.*

By a thousand and one tricks the capitalists in a bourgeois democracy—and these tricks are the most skilful and the more effective, the further "pure" democracy has developed—keep the masses out of the administration and frustrate the freedom of the press, the right of assembly, etc. The Soviet regime, on the contrary, is the first in the world (or strictly speaking, the second, because the Commune of Paris attempted to do the same thing) to *attract* the masses, that is, the *exploited* masses, to the work of administration. The labouring masses are kept away from the bourgeois parliament (which *never* decides the most important questions in a bourgeois democracy, as they are decided by the Stock Exchange and the banks) by a thousand and one barriers, in consequence of which the working class perfectly well realises that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions *foreign* to them, are an *instrument of oppression* of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, are an institution of the hostile class, of the exploiting minority.

. . . This could have remained unnoticed only by a person who is either the deliberate henchman of the bourgeoisie or is politically dead, does not see life from behind the dusty pages of bourgeois books, is permeated through and through by bourgeois democratic prejudices, and thereby, objectively speaking, becomes the lackey of the bourgeoisie.

This could have remained unnoticed only by a man who is incapable of putting the question from the point of view of the exploited classes. Is there a single country in the world, even among the most democratic bourgeois countries, in which the ordinary rank-and-file worker, the ordinary rank-and-file village labourer or village semi-proletarian (that is, the overwhelming majority of the population), enjoys anything approaching the *liberty* of giving utterance to his ideas and of protecting his interests in print by means of the best printing works and largest stocks of paper, such liberty of appointing men and women of his own class to administer and to organise the State, as in Soviet Russia?

The mere thought that Mr. Kautsky could find in any country one single worker, or agricultural labourer in a thousand who, on

being informed of the facts, would hesitate in replying to this question is absurd. Instinctively, through reading the bare fragments of truth in the bourgeois press, the workers of the entire world sympathise with the Soviet Republic, just because they see in it a *proletarian* democracy, a democracy *for the poor*, and not a democracy for the rich, as is the case with every bourgeois democracy, even the best. "We are ruled, and our State is run, by bourgeois bureaucrats, by capitalist parliaments, by capitalist judges"—such is the simple, indisputable, and obvious truth, which is known and felt, through their own daily experience, by tens and hundreds of millions of the exploited classes in all bourgeois countries, including the most democratic. In Russia, on the other hand, the bureaucratic apparatus has been completely smashed, the old judges have all been driven from their seats, the bourgeois parliament has been dispersed, and instead the workers and peasants have received a much more *popular* representation, their Soviets have replaced the bureaucrats, or are controlling them, and their Soviets have become the authorities who elect the judges. This fact alone is enough to justify all the oppressed classes in regarding the Soviet regime, that is, the Soviet form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic.

But Kautsky does not understand this truth, so obvious to every worker, because he has forgotten how to put the question: democracy for which class? If he starts from "pure" (does it mean non-class or above-class?) democracy and simply says: Without equality of citizenship there can be no democracy, one has to ask the learned Kautsky, the "Marxist" and the "Socialist," the following question: Can there be equality between the exploited and the exploiters? It is monstrous, it is incredible, that one should have to ask such a question in discussing a book by the leading thinker of the Second International. But there is no way of escaping from this necessity. In writing about Kautsky one has to explain to him, learned man that he is, why there can be no equality between the exploiters and the exploited.

3. *Can there be equality between the Exploiters and the Exploited?*

Kautsky says, "The exploiters always formed but a small minority of the population" (p. 14).

This is certainly true. Taking it as the starting-point, what should

be the argument ? One may argue in a Marxist, in a Socialist way, taking as a basis the relation between the exploited and the exploiter, or one may argue in a liberal, in a bourgeois-democratic way, taking as a basis the relation of the majority to the minority.

If we argue in a Marxist way, we must say : The exploiters must inevitably turn the State (we are thinking of a democracy, that is, one of the forms of the State) into an instrument of domination of their class over the exploited class. Hence, so long as there are exploiters ruling the majority of exploited, the democratic State must inevitably be a democracy for the exploiters. The State of the exploited must fundamentally differ from such a State : it must be a democracy for the exploited, and for the suppression of the exploiters. But the suppression of a class means inequality in so far as this class is concerned, and its exclusion from the privileges of "democracy."

. . . The relation between the exploited and the exploiters has entirely vanished in Kautsky's arguments, and all that remains is a majority in general, a democracy in general, that is, the "pure democracy" which is already familiar to us. And all this, mark you, is said *à propos* of the Commune of Paris !

Let us quote, by way of illustration, how Marx and Engels discuss the subject of dictatorship, also *à propos* of the Commune :

Marx : "When the workers substitute for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie . . . their revolutionary dictatorship . . . in order to break down the resistance of the bourgeoisie . . . the workers invest the State with a revolutionary and transitional form. . . ."

Engels : "The party which has triumphed in the revolution is inevitably forced to maintain its supremacy by means of that fear which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune of Paris have lasted a single day had it not relied on the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie ? Are we not, on the contrary, entitled to blame the Commune for not having made sufficient use of this authority ?"

Engels : "As a State is only a temporary institution which is to be made use of in the revolution, in order forcibly to suppress its opponents, it is a perfect absurdity to speak about the free popular state. So long as the proletariat still needs the State, it needs it, not in the interest of freedom, but in order to suppress its opponents ; and when it becomes possible to speak of freedom, the State as such ceases."

The distance between Kautsky, on the one hand, and Marx and Engels on the other, is as great as between heaven and earth, as between the bourgeois Liberal and the proletarian revolutionary. "Pure democracy," or simple "democracy," of which Kautsky speaks, is but a paraphrase of the "free popular State," that is, perfect absurdity. Kautsky, with the learned air of a most learned arm-chair fool, or else with the innocent air of a ten-year-old girl, is asking: Why do we need a dictatorship when we have a majority? And Marx and Engels explain: In order to break down the resistance of the bourgeoisie; in order to inspire the reactionaries with fear; in order to maintain the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie; in order that the proletariat may forcibly suppress its enemies!

We all know the example of the Commune, we all know what the founders of Marxism said in connection with it. On the strength of their pronouncement I examined the question of democracy and dictatorship in my book, *The State and Revolution*, which I wrote before the November revolution. The restriction of the franchise was not touched by me at all. At present it might be added that the question of the restriction of the franchise is a specific national question, and not one relating to dictatorship in general. One must study the question of the restriction of the franchise in the light of the *specific* course of the development of the Russian Revolution. This will be done in subsequent pages. But it would be rash to guarantee in advance that the impending proletarian revolution in Europe will all, or for the most part, be accompanied by a restriction of the franchise in the case of the bourgeoisie. This may be so. In fact, after the war and after the experience of the Russian revolution it will probably be so. But it is not absolutely necessary for the establishment of a dictatorship. It is not necessarily implied in the idea of dictatorship, it does not enter as a necessary condition into the historical or class conception of dictatorship. What forms a necessary aspect, or a necessary condition of dictatorship, is the forcible suppression of the exploiters as a class, and consequently an infringement of "pure democracy," that is, of equality and freedom, *in respect of that class*.

VI

EXCERPT FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE VIIth CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF RUSSIA, ON THE REVISION OF THE PROGRAMME AND THE NAME OF THE PARTY

Our task is to characterise the Soviet type of government. I have tried to set out my theoretical views on this question in the book, *State and Revolution*. It seems to me that the Marxist view of government has been very greatly distorted by the predominant official Socialism in Western Europe, but it is very clearly confirmed by the experience of the Soviet Revolution and the creation of the Soviets in Russia. In our Soviets there is much that is crude and unfinished. This cannot be doubted, it is clear to everyone who has observed their work; but the important thing, the historically valuable event which represents a step forward in the world development of Socialism, is the fact that a new type of government has been formed here.

In the Paris Commune, this took place for a few weeks in a single town, without the workers realising what they were doing. The Communards did not understand what they had created. They created with the instinctive genius of the awakened masses, and not a fraction of the French Socialists realised what they were doing. But since we are standing on the shoulders of the Paris Commune, and the long development of German Social-Democracy, we can see clearly what we were doing when we formed a Soviet government. The new type of Government has been formed by the masses of the people, in spite of the crudeness and lack of discipline which exists in the Soviets—which is a relic of the petty-bourgeois character of our country. It has been in operation not for a few weeks or months, not in a single town but in a tremendous country, in several nations. This type of Soviet government will justify itself. . . .

The Soviet Government is an apparatus by the aid of which the masses can begin immediately to learn how to govern and to organise industry on a national scale. This is a tremendous and difficult task. But it is important that we fight for this not only from the point of view of our country, we must call upon the workers of Europe to help us in this task. We must concretely explain our programme from

this general point of view. This is why we consider that this is a continuation of the Paris Commune. This is why we are convinced that by entering on this path, the European workers will be able to assist us. . . .

We say that every time we are thrown backwards—if the hostile class forces drive us to this old position—we shall, without refusing to make the most of bourgeois parliamentarism, strive for what has been won by experience, for the Soviet power, for the Soviet type of Government, for a Government of the type of the Paris Commune. This should be expressed in the programme. . . .

VII

EXCERPT FROM "BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT"

. . . The Paris Commune, extolled in words by all who wish to be considered Socialists—since they know that the workers warmly and sincerely sympathise with it—has very clearly proved the historical limitations and limited value of bourgeois parliamentarism and democracy, which, although very progressive institutions in comparison with those of the Middle Ages, require, in these times of proletarian revolution, absolutely necessary and fundamental changes. Marx, who best of all interpreted the historical meaning of the Commune, has proved in his analysis the exploiting character of bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism, under which, once in the course of several years, the oppressed classes are allowed to decide what member of the propertied classes shall "represent and repress" (*vertreten und zertreten*) the people, in Parliament. And now, when the Soviet movement throughout the world is openly continuing the work of the Commune, these traitors to Socialism forget the practical experiences and concrete lessons of the Paris Commune, and repeat the old middle-class rubbish about "democracy in general."

Furthermore, the importance of the Commune lies in the effort that was made to break up and destroy the capitalist state bureaucratic machine, the courts of justice, military and police apparatus, and to replace it by a self-governing mass organisation of workmen, making no distinction between legislative and executive powers.

All bourgeois democratic republics of to-day, including the German, which the traitors to Socialism falsely assert to be proletarian, retain this bourgeois State apparatus. This is again a clear and distinct proof that the defence of "democracy" is only another name for the defence of the bourgeoisie and its privilege of exploitation.

VIII

EXCERPT FROM LETTER TO THE WORKERS OF EUROPE AND AMERICA*

"SOVIET power" is the second world-historical step or stage in the development of the proletarian dictatorship. The first step was the Paris Commune. The brilliant analysis of the essence and significance of this Commune, given by Marx in his *Civil War in France*, showed that the Commune created a *new type* of state, *the proletarian state*. Every state, including the most democratic republic, is nothing but a machine for the suppression of one class by another. The proletarian state is the machine for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat, and such suppression is necessary because of the frenzied, desperate, and reckless resistance offered by the big landowners and capitalists, by the whole bourgeoisie and its lackeys, by all exploiters, as soon as their overthrow, the expropriation of the expropriators, begins.

IX

EXCERPT FROM "THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT IN OUR REVOLUTION"

THE significance of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies is not understood. Not only is the class character and the role of the Soviets in the Russian Revolution not clearly understood, but the fact that they represent a new form, or rather, a new type of State is not appreciated.

* The letter from which this excerpt is taken was published in *Pravda* on January 24th, 1919. It deals with the betrayal of the working class movement by the IInd International, the formation of the Communist International, the spread of the revolutionary movement in Europe and the significance of the Soviets.—*Editor.*

The most perfect and advanced type of the bourgeois State is that of the parliamentary, democratic republic. Power is vested in parliament; the machinery of government apparatus, and organs of administration are of the usual type: a standing army, police, and a bureaucracy which is practically irremovable, privileged, and set over the people.

But the revolutionary epochs, beginning with the end of the 19th century, bring into existence the highest type of democratic State, the kind of State which, in certain respects, to quote Engels, ceases to be a State, "is no longer a State in the proper sense of the word." This is a State of the type of the Paris Commune, a State replacing the standing army and the police, which are cut off from the people, by direct arming of the people itself. This is the essence of the Commune, which has been so much misrepresented and slandered by bourgeois writers, which, among other things, has been erroneously accused of wishing to "introduce" Socialism all at once.

This is the type of State which the Russian revolution began by creating in the years 1905 and 1917. A republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, united in an all-Russian Constituent Assembly of the Peoples' Representatives, or in a Soviet of Soviets, etc.—this is what is already coming into existence now, at this very moment, upon the initiative of the millions of the people who, of their own accord, are creating democracy in their own way, without waiting until the learned professors of the Cadet party have scrawled out drafts of laws for a parliamentary bourgeois republic, or until the pedants and routine-worshippers of petty-bourgeois "Social-Democracy," like Plekhanov and Kautsky, have given up distorting the Marxist doctrine of the State.

Marxism differs from Anarchism in that it declares that the State and Government are necessary in a revolutionary epoch in general, and in the epoch of transition from capitalism to Socialism in particular.

Marxism differs from the petty-bourgeois opportunist "Social-Democracy" of Plekhanov, Kautsky and Co., in that it declares that in the above-mentioned epochs a State is necessary, but not a State like the ordinary bourgeois parliamentary republic, but one like the Paris Commune.

The principal difference between this type of State and the bourgeois State is the following:

It is extremely easy to revert from a bourgeois republic to a mon-

archy (as history proves), since all the machinery of repression is left intact: army, police, bureaucracy. The Commune, and the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, smash and abolish this machinery.

A bourgeois parliamentary republic strangles and crushes the independent political life of the masses, prevents their direct participation in the democratic up-building of all State life from the bottom to the top. The opposite is true of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies.

The latter reproduce the type of State that was being evolved by the Paris Commune and that Marx called the "political form, at last discovered, under which the economic liberation of the toilers can take place."

The usual objection is that the Russian people is not yet prepared for the "introduction" of the Commune. This was the argument of the serf-owners who claimed that the peasants were not prepared for freedom. The Commune, *i.e.*, the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, does not "introduce," does not want to "introduce," and should not introduce any change which is not absolutely justified both in respect to economic reality and to the degree of consciousness of the overwhelming majority of the people. The more terrible the economic collapse and the crisis produced by the war, the more urgent is the need for a political form as nearly perfect as possible which can help to heal the wounds inflicted upon humanity by the war. The less organisational experience the Russian people has, the more determinedly must the people itself take in hand the reconstruction of its organisation, not leaving it merely to a few bourgeois politicians and well-paid bureaucrats.

X

EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLES' COMMISSARS AT THE THIRD ALL-RUSSIAN CONGRESS OF SOVIETS*

COMRADES,

On behalf of the Council of Peoples' Commissars, I have to report

* January 24 (11), 1918.

to you on its activities for the two months and fifteen days which have passed since the establishment of Soviet Rule and of the Soviet Government in Russia.

Two months and fifteen days—this is only five days more than the period during which a previous workers' government was in power over a whole country, or over the exploiters and capitalists—the power of the workers of Paris in the epoch of the Paris Commune of 1871.

We must recall this workers' government, we must look back into the past and compare it with the Soviet Rule which was established on November 7 (October 25). This comparison with the previous dictatorship of the proletariat will show at once what a tremendous stride forward has been made by the international labour movement, and in what an incomparably more favourable situation is the Soviet power in Russia, in spite of the unprecedentedly complex conditions of war and devastation.

The Parisian workers who first created the Commune, which was the embryo of the Soviet power, held their power for two months and ten days and perished under the fire of the French cadets, Mensheviks, right Social-Revolutionary and Kaledinites. The French workers were compelled to pay an unprecedentedly heavy price in victims for the first experiment of a workers' government, the aims and ideas of which were not understood by the overwhelming majority of the peasants in France.

We are in a much better position because the Russian soldiers, workers and peasants have succeeded in creating an apparatus which informed the whole world of the forms of their struggle, namely, the Soviet government. Hence the position of the Russian workers and peasants is greatly different from that of the proletariat of Paris. They had no apparatus, the country did not understand them, but we at once based ourselves on the power of the Soviets, and hence there was never any doubt for us that the Soviet power has the sympathy and the most enthusiastic and faithful support of the overwhelming majority of the masses, and that therefore the Soviet power is invincible.

XI

THE PARIS COMMUNE AND THE TASKS OF THE DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP

WAS the Commune a dictatorship of the proletariat?

Engels' preface to the third edition of Marx's *Civil War in France* concludes with the following words:

> "Of late, the man in the street has again been terrified by the words: Dictatorship of the proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat."

But then, not all dictatorships are alike. Perhaps it was a *real*, *pure* dictatorship of the proletariat in the sense that its composition and the nature of its practical tasks were purely Social-Democratic? Certainly not! The class-conscious proletariat (and only *more or less* class-conscious, at that), *i.e.*, the members of the International, were in a *minority*; the majority of the government consisted of representatives of petty-bourgeois democracy. One of its latest investigators (Gustave Jaeckh) states so most unequivocally. In the central Committee of the National Guard, for instance, there were thirty-five members of whom only two were Socialists (*i.e.*, members of the International), but on the other hand, these two (Varlin and Avoine) had enormous influence among their colleagues in power. Lissagaray writes about the same committee: "Were its members well-known agitators? or Socialists? Not at all; not a single well-known name: petty-bourgeois shopkeepers, grocers, clerks. . . ." And yet Varlin and Avoine joined the Committee. Later on, Pindy, Austin and Jourdes joined this committee.

The *New Yorker Arbeiterzeitung*, the organ of the International, in its issue of July 18, 1874, wrote as follows:

> "The Commune was not the work of the International; these two were not identical, but the members of the International accepted the programme of the Commune, at the same time greatly extending its original scope. They were also its most zealous, most reliable champions, for they understood its importance for the working class."

The "General Council" which, as is well known, was headed by Marx, approved these tactics of the Paris Federation of the International. In its Manifesto, it stated: "Wherever and in whatever form and under whatever conditions the class struggle is waged, it is natural for the members of our Association to stand in the front ranks." But our predecessors, the members of the International, did not wish to be merged with the Commune. All the time they defended *their* separate purely proletarian party organisation. Jaeckh writes: "The Federal Council of the International, through its representatives, first in the Central Committee, then in the Commune, succeeded in establishing its constant influence on the development of important questions."

A splendid proof of the independence of the proletarian organisation of that time, the representatives of which, however, took part in the government, may be supplied by the following invitation card:

> "A special meeting of the Federal Council of the International Workingmen's Association will be held on Saturday, May 20, at 1 p.m. The members of the Commune, who are also members of the International are invited to be present. They will be asked to report on the position they have taken up in the Commune, and of the cause and nature of the differences that have arisen in its midst. Entrance by membership card only."

And here is another very interesting document, the decision of the above-mentioned special meeting:

> "The International Workingmen's Association at its special meeting on May 20, passed the following resolution: 'Having heard the report of its members, who are also members of the Commune, this meeting approves their position as being perfectly loyal, and resolves to urge them to continue to defend in the future the interests of the working class by all means in their power, and also strive to preserve the unity of the Commune in order to intensify the struggle against the Versailles government. Moreover, the meeting recommends that they insist on full publicity for the meetings of the Commune and the repeal of paragraph 3 of its Manifesto as being incompatible with the right of the people to control the actions of the executive, namely, the Committee of Public Welfare.' "

Six members of the Commune were present at this meeting, three excused themselves for being absent. On March 19 Lissagaray counted up twenty-five representatives of the working class in the Commune, but not all of them belonged to the International: the majority even then consisted of petty-bourgeois elements.

This is not the place to relate the history of the Commune and the role played in it by members of the International. We shall only state that Donville was a member of the Executive Commission; Varlin, Jourde, and Beslay, of the Finance Commission; Donville and Pindy, of the Military Commission; Assy and Chalain, of the commission of Public Safety; Malon, Frankel, Theisz, Dupont and Avrail, of the Labour Commission. On April 16, new elections took place, and a few more members of the International were elected (among others, Marx's son-in-law, Longuet), but the Commune included also some of the avowed enemies of the International, such as, for instance, Vesimier. Towards the end of the Commune the finances were in charge of two very able members of the International: Jourde and Varlin.

Trade and labour were presided over by Frankel, the postal and telegraphic service, the mint and the direct taxes, were also in the charge of Socialists. Still, the majority of the most important ministries, as is remarked by Jaeckh, remained in the hands of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Thus there can be no doubt that Engels, in calling the Commune a dictatorship of the proletariat, had in view only the participation, and, moreover, the *ideological leading* participation, of the representatives of the proletariat in the revolutionary government of Paris.

But perhaps the immediate object of the Commune was none the less a complete Socialist revolution? We can cherish no such illusions.

True, in the famous Manifesto of the General Council on the Commune, which was undoubtedly written by Marx, it is stated: "The Commune was to serve as a lever for the destruction of the foundations of the capitalist system of production, on which class domination is based." But immediately afterwards the Manifesto adds:

> "The working class *did not demand miracles* from the Commune. The Commune was not called upon to realise at once any Utopias. It (the working class) knows that for its emancipation and the attainment of higher forms of social life . . . it is necessary to

pass through a whole series of historical processes, which must radically alter both the environment and the nature of human beings. The Commune did not pursue the realisation of any ideals: it was expected only to set free the elements of the new society which has already developed within the womb of over-ripe capitalism."

All the measures, all the social legislation of the Commune were of a practical, not a Utopian, character. The Commune tried to carry out what we now call "the minimum programme of socialism." In order to recall to mind what precisely the Commune did in that direction, we shall quote the following extract from Engels' preface, already mentioned:

"The Paris Commune was elected on March 26 and proclaimed on the 28th. The Central Committee of the National Guard, which had hitherto carried on the Government, abdicated its functions to the Commune. On the 30th, the Commune abolished conscription and the standing army, and all military forces except the National Guard, to which all citizens capable of bearing arms were to belong. It remitted all rents from October, 1870, to 1871, such rent as had already been paid to be placed to the account of future payments; it returned gratis all goods of necessitous persons pledged in the municipal pawnshops. The same day the election of foreigners to the Commune was endorsed and their right to function was confirmed, since it was declared 'the banner of the Commune is that of the world Republic.' On the 1st of April it was decided that the highest salary of a functionary of the Commune, whether a member or otherwise, was not to exceed 6,000 francs a year. On the following day the separation of Church and State was declared, all State payments for religious purposes were stopped and all ecclesiastical property was converted into national property. As a consequence of this, on the 8th of April, all religious symbols, dogmas, prayers—in short, 'all things appertaining to the sphere of the individual conscience—were ordered to be banished from the schools, an order which was gradually carried out. On the 6th, the guillotine was fetched out by the 137th battalion of the National Guard, and publicly burned with popular acclamation. On the 18th, the Commune ordered the column on the Place Vendome, which had

been constructed by Napoleon I, after the war of 1809, out of captured cannon, to be overthrown as a monument of chauvinism and international rivalry. This was accomplished on the 16th of May. On the 16th of April, the Commune ordered that all factories and workshops not working be registered, and ordered plans for their being run by the workmen hitherto engaged in them, who were to be formed into co-operative societies for the purpose. Furthermore, these societies were to be amalgamated into one great co-operative organisation. On the 20th, they abolished the labour exchange, which, since the Second Empire, had been the monopoly of certain scoundrels appointed by the police, exploiters of the worst kind. The matter was henceforward placed under the control of the mayors of the twenty arrondissements of Paris. On the 20th of April, the Commune decreed the abolition of pawnshops as being incompatible with the right of workmen to their tools and to credit. On the 5th of May it ordered the destruction of the chapel erected in expiation of the execution of Louis XVI."

As is known, the Commune, partly owing to the mistakes committed by it, and its excessive generosity, did not succeed in repressing the reaction. The communards perished. Well, did they disgrace or compromise the cause of the proletariat, as is being croaked by Martynov with one eye on the possible future revolutionary government in Russia ? Obviously not—for this is what Marx wrote about the Commune :

> "The Workingmen's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. History has already nailed its exterminators to that public pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

It seems to us that this brief historical record is instructive. It teaches us, first of all, that the participation of representatives of the Socialist proletariat in a revolutionary government together with the petty-bourgeoisie is quite admissible in principle, and under certain conditions is simply imperative. It shows us, further, that the practical task which the Commune had to carry out was above all the

realisation of a democratic, not of a Socialist, dictatorship, the realisation of our "minimum programme." Finally, it reminds us that in deriving lessons for ourselves from the Paris Commune, we must imitate, not its errors (they did not seize the Bank of France, they did not undertake an offensive against Versailles, they had no clear programme, etc.), but its practically successful measures, which indicate the correct path. It is not the term "Commune" that we must borrow from the great fighters of 1871, nor must we blindly repeat every one of their slogans. What we must do is to make a careful selection of these slogans referring to their programme and practice which correspond to the condition of things in Russia and which are summed up in the words: revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

(*Proletary*, No. 8, July 17, 1905.)